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To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft Antitrust Settlement

The information that has been made available through the press and commentary by individuals knowledgeable in the world of personal computers indicate that the result of the subject settlement will be a disservice to the consumer.

If Microsoft were to expend as much money and effort in producing and supporting their products as they do in executing legal maneuvers, they would not have to browbeat their vendors and customers to gain acceptance of their software. They have a consistent history of amending their license terms such that a consumer cannot depend upon getting the support called for in the documentation that accompanies their product.

As an example, I purchased the upgrade from Windows 95 to Windows 98SE and the documentation said that I would get 90 days of live telephone product support from the date of my first call. I installed the software and required assistance after 30 days had gone by (I had been trying to use on-line help and their support site). I called the support line and was told that this was the first of my TWO live support calls that I was allowed. I asked about the 90 days provision and was told that it was no longer their support policy.

This is as basic a consumer fraud issue as a car manufacturer reducing a buyer's new car warranty. Yeah, I know they put it in the fine print that if I don't want to accept their license terms I can return the software within 30 days for a refund. What do we do for personal operating systems then? We've already committed to hardware that requires windows. Let's get in the real world and realize that they can only get away with this because of the monopoly they've built in the operating system arena.

Their software is poorly written as evidenced by the unbelievable number of patches they have to produce for each rendition of their software. Allowing them to continue, and indeed strengthen, their demonstrated monopolistic behavior can only cause increased consumer dissatisfaction with no recourse, they hold all the cards. I don't know of another software company that's been able to survive producing applications with failures and security problems to the extent Microsoft does.

Allowing them to integrate more utility and functional software into the operating system will enable them to extend this monopoly to nearly the entire range of utility and functional software currently available from multiple vendors. Obviously there may be some exceptions to this, primarily in very specialized applications such as CAD/CAM, accounting systems, etc.

The greatest impact will be in the consumer and general business office software. We are the "silent majority" that get lost in the political sea changes after so much of our money is spent in pursuit of the issue. I will be extremely disappointed if SEVERE constraints are not placed upon both what Microsoft can integrate into the operating system and the extent to which they are allowed to change support provisions after an Item is purchased.